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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KUWAIT 000274

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STATE FOR NEA/ARPI

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TAGS: [KISL](#) [PREL](#) [KU](#) [IZ](#) [IR](#) [ISLAMISTS](#) [SHI](#)

SUBJECT: SHI'A CLERIC SAYS SHIITES LOSING LAST YEAR'S GAINS, ACCUSES GOK OF BOWING TO ISLAMIST PRESSURES

REF: A. KUWAIT 0036

[B](#). 04 KUWAIT 4452

Classified By: DCM Matthew Tueller for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary and Comment: During a January 4 meeting, Secretary General of the Shiite Clerics Congregation and

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self-appointed representative of Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani, Sayed Mohammed Baqr Al-Mohri, shared with Poloff his views on the resignation of Shiite Information Minister Mohammed Abulhassan, the growing influence of Sunni Islamists and what he characterized as the accompanying curbing of Shiite rights. While Al-Mohri's comments and warnings about the growth of Islamism for the most part ring true, it should be noted that his views are colored by his role as a minority, sectarian activist. Nonetheless, the violent clashes between Sunni extremists and Kuwaiti security in mid-January have proven that he is not too far off the mark. End Summary and Comment.

Information Minister Victim of GOK Fear; Shi'a Say Resignation Insulting and Result of GOK Fear  
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[1](#)2. (C) Two days after the resignation of Information Minister Mohammed Abulhassan and three days after the detention of four members of the Kuwaiti military for conspiring to commit terrorist acts, Poloff met with Shiite Clerics Congregation SYG Mohammed Baqr Al-Mohri to discuss political events in Kuwait. Al-Mohri said Abulhassan's resignation was the outcome of a Salafi campaign against the Shiite Minister which had been undertaken "from day one" of his term of office. Repeating what he reportedly told Agence France Press (AFP) and Radio Sawa in separate interviews, Al-Mohri called the resignation a victory for extremists and hardline groups in Kuwait and an insult to the Shiite sect "in Kuwait and everywhere."

[1](#)3. (C) Although he admitted that the Information Minister had made some mistakes during his tenure (ref. a), Al-Mohri pointed out that Abulhassan later reversed these decisions, but his resignation was still accepted by PM Shaykh Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah; in Al-Mohri's eyes, this was a clear sign of fear by the PM.

Government "Not Doing Anything" to Combat Islamists  
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[1](#)4. (C) Railing against the penetration of Kuwaiti society by Sunni Islamists, Al-Mohri said the GOK was paralyzed by its fear of Islamist political power. Citing examples of its inactivity, he pointed out that Islamists had recently "attacked" shops selling Christmas trees (ref. b), openly distributed pamphlets inciting sectarian hatred against Shia and forced the government to ban New Years parties in major hotels. The government, he said, is "not doing anything" to respond.

Military Terrorists are the "Alarm Bell"  
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[1](#)5. (C) Referring to the January 1 detention of four members of Kuwait's military for conspiring to commit terrorist acts, Al-Mohri said the biggest "alarm bell" for Kuwait was the fact that the country's military was "full of fanatics" and the government had only discovered this fact by accident. He said the number of military personnel involved in terrorist planning was surely higher than the four detained by the GOK. He added that the group may have links to Al-Qaeda, but definitely sympathizes with Zarqawi and UBL. Al-Mohri urged the U.S. government to approach PM Shaykh Sabah to convince him to take stronger actions. He also suggested that the Kuwait Ministry of Defense (KMOD) conduct more thorough background checks on all military recruits.

Islamists Influencing GOK to Curb Shiite Rights  
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[1](#)6. (C) Yet another result of the growing influence of Islamists, Al-Mohri said, is a rollback of some of the Shiite political gains made during the previous year and a half.

Unlike last year, he said, the GOK has already turned down a request by Kuwaiti Shiites to publicly reenact the Battle of Karbala during Ashoura. In addition, requests for a family law court utilizing Shia jurisprudence and the establishment of a Shiite University were rebuffed this year. Finally, he said, the approval of building permits for Shiite mosques has slowed to its previously glacial pace (Al Mohri noted one petition had been in consideration for twelve years). All of these rollbacks have taken place in an environment of increasing sectarian strife driven by the growing intolerance of radical Islamists.

17. (U) Baghdad Minimize Considered.

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